

## Patient becomes a practitioner

Woman says Feldenkrais Method brings flexibility

By Dave Moller, [davem@theunion.com](mailto:davem@theunion.com)

[» More from Dave Moller](#)

12:01 a.m. PT Jul 7, 2006

Jackie Mason is familiar with her patients because she was once just like them. The former computer system architect woke up one day with intense pain in her right shoulder. She had no idea why it was occurring, but she did know it wouldn't stop.

"Nothing cut the pain, it was 24 hours a day," said Mason of Nevada City. "I went to physical therapy, chiropractic, massage, nothing touched it. I was actually getting suicidal. I couldn't do my job and I couldn't concentrate."

Then one day she met a person who told her about The Feldenkrais Method, developed by Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais to help people improve their movement, flexibility and coordination with less or no pain. The method teaches the movement we all had at birth that allows muscles to be free of tension and brings balance through the skeleton.

"In one session I was better and it got me out of pain," Mason said. "I never wanted to be disempowered like that again."

Mason felt so strongly about the method that she learned to teach it over a four-year period. She began teaching it in 1994 and has been performing it now out of her home full-time for the past two years, working with stroke, fibromyalgia, scoliosis and chronic pain victims.

"This is not fru-fru," Mason said. "It should be mainstream for those who have an injury. It's based on how we moved as babies and I call it movement for life."

Back then, we learned in a natural progression how to lift our heads, roll over, sit up, crawl and then finally stand and walk. Using those same motions, Mason teaches a patient how to free up their tight muscles and begin to function again more normally.

"It's moving with your structure rather than your musculature," Mason said.

It all starts with sitting, Mason said, an abnormal position for the body, which she said is actually designed to squat.

"Sitting immobilizes the pelvis and it is the largest bone we have, half way down the body and the center of our balance," Mason said.

While most people lift their whole body out of a chair with their muscle strength. Mason teaches people how to bend over and move their pelvis out of the chair, which causes the rest of the body to



Jackie Mason uses the Feldenkrais Method on Gary Schlosser in her Nevada City home. The method helps improve coordination, flexibility and movement. The Union photo/John Hart

follow. It teaches people to balance themselves with their skeleton and to not overuse the muscles to do the same thing.

She teaches other movements for various every-day functions, retraining the muscles to move more appropriately with the skeleton and to create different neurological pathways to the muscles from the brain.

Mason also deals with the mental and emotional part of a patient's problems. She often teaches deep breathing to deal with pain.

"The other challenge for people in pain is that some of them are attached to their pain and their drugs," Mason said. Her program is designed to deal with, and not just live with pain.

"Nobody comes to see me unless they've tried everything else, they've done the drugs, they've done the (physical therapy)," Mason said. "I'm the last resort.

"Everything I give to people to practice is functional in life," Mason said. "Older people say they can't turn their neck," and she shows them how. Others are taught to sit, reach or leave a chair, "things you're going to do one million times a day."

#### The patients

Doreen Raikowski, 54, of Rough and Ready had a major stroke in March of 2004.

"I was in a wheelchair for three months and I couldn't drive," Raikowski said. "Now I'm able to walk with a cane and I drive," thanks to Mason's teachings.

"She makes you aware of the best way to shift and move your pelvis and you practice it," Raikowski said. "Every time I walk, I do what I've been taught. I would recommend it for anybody having trouble walking or with mobility problems."

Raikowski sees Mason two to three times per week for one-hour sessions. Jerry Pressler does, too, after turning to Mason to deal with 50 years of back pain.

"I had been through all kinds of things, doctors here and in the Bay Area, acupuncture," said Pressler, 79, of Grass Valley. "Nothing helped and I didn't want shots or surgery."

With Mason, "I could see improvement the first few months," Pressler said. "I can walk now and walk further without pain.

"It was extremely successful and I sent other people to see her, but some are very skeptical," Pressler said. "It's a matter of getting the muscles to relax themselves.

"How can this possibly work?" Pressler said. " I don't know, but it does."

Bill Maskill, now 63, of Grass Valley, was only 39 when he had a massive stroke. He could not talk or walk for three years, but managed to start getting a little better. Walking was not possible, but laborious.

"I had hip-gait walking, total left-side walking," Maskill said. "One year ago I started with Jackie and it's a world of difference."

"She taught me how to use my right side and I'm walking with no help now," Maskill said. "It's so fast compared to what happened over the past 25 years."

ooo

To contact senior staff writer Dave Moller, e-mail [davem@theunion.com](mailto:davem@theunion.com) or call 477-4237.

For more information

To contact Jackie Mason, call 478-9547 or e-mail [affinc@pacbell.net](mailto:affinc@pacbell.net).

To learn more about The Feldenkrais Method, look up these Web sites, [www.feldenkrais.com](http://www.feldenkrais.com) or [www.anatbanielmethod.com](http://www.anatbanielmethod.com).